

PRESS RELEASE

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ANDERTON BOAT LIFT WILL REOPEN IN MARCH 2023 AFTER £450K REPAIR PACKAGE

The world's first boat lift, Anderton Boat Lift, near Northwich, will reopen to boats in spring after a major £450,000 repair package this winter, the Canal & River Trust has confirmed.

The waterways and wellbeing charity, which operates the Victorian Scheduled Monument alongside caring for its 2,000-mile network of canals and rivers, will start emergency repair works in mid-November, with the aim of reopening the lift by the end of March 2023.

The lift, which each year carries around 3,000 boats between the Trent & Mersey Canal and the River Weaver, has not been able to operate since early August, when the safety mechanism in one of the lift's gates failed, due to a broken 'shoot bolt bracket'. However the visitor centre and café have remained open and the Edwin Clark trip boat has continued to offer alternative short cruises along the River Weaver Navigation to Northwich and back.

Over winter, the Trust will be delivering two key repair projects. Two giant hydraulic ram cylinders, which each propel a caisson transporting boats up and down, are being given a much-needed overhaul. The large metal tank caissons will be detached from the rams and propped up about two metres above ground level to allow the 20-year-old cylinder seals to be replaced, the ceramic rams re-polished and re-set, and 12,000 litres of hydraulic oil to be changed.

Each of the lift's ten sets of gates will also have two new 'fall and arrest' safety systems installed, which act like a giant seat belt in an emergency. Following identification of the safety issue in the summer, new designs have had to be engineered, approved by Historic England and manufactured. Once the repairs have been carried out, the lift will have a short recommissioning period of about two to four weeks before it is once again available to carry boats.

Canal & River Trust

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Patron: H.R.H. The Prince of Wales. Canal & River Trust is a charitable company limited by guarantee, registered in England and Wales with company number 7807276 and registered charity number 1146792, registered office address: National Waterways Museum, Ellesmere Port.

Fran Littlewood, Canal & River Trust project manager, explained: “The Anderton Boat Lift is a unique structure and one of the Wonders of the Waterways. Because of its uniqueness, every operating element is a one-off and needs to be designed specially to work within a structure that is nearly 150 years old. This is its charm but also brings huge challenges when parts need replacing.

“This winter’s work will allow the lift to return to operation in time for Easter and the start of the 2023 summer boating season. However, we are very aware that it is over 20 years since the major restoration project. Reopened by King Charles when he was Prince of Wales, it has successfully been carrying boats for two decades. But now the lift requires some significant work to bring it up to modern day operating standards, including the introduction of a new wireless computer control system, targeted steelwork repairs and a full repaint. The Trust has applied to the National Lottery Heritage Fund for a £5 million grant and we should hear whether we have been successful with our first-round application before Christmas.

“If the bid does succeed, we can then start designing this next major phase of works which will ensure a secure future for the lift as a historic working monument for decades to come. If all goes to plan, the lift will be fully open to boaters during the 2023 and 2024 boating season, before closing in autumn 2024 for an 18-month programme of works, reopening again in spring 2026.”

The Anderton Boat Lift Visitor Centre will continue to welcome visitors throughout the winter at weekends – Saturdays and Sundays, 9.30am – 4.30pm. The Trust’s popular Santa Cruises will run in December. For more information, check out the Canal & River Trust website: <https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/places-to-visit/anderton-boat-lift-visitor-centre> or call 01606 786777.

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Notes to Editors

The Canal & River Trust cares for and brings to life 2,000 miles of canals and rivers across England & Wales. We believe waterways have the power to make a difference to people’s lives and that spending time by water can make us all healthier and happier. By bringing communities together to make a difference to their local waterway, we are creating places and spaces that can be used and enjoyed by everyone, every day.
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